



By Elder David S. Baxter
Of the Seventy

LEAVING ADVERSITY BEHIND

*There will
come a time
when we can
leave adversity
behind and,
with the Lord's
help, emerge
from darkness
into an abun-
dance of light.*

One of the great hymns of the Restoration, penned by Parley P. Pratt, speaks of how the dark curtains of apostasy opened to the glorious light of truth restored:

*The morning breaks, the shadows flee;
Lo, Zion's standard is unfurled! . . .
The dawning of a brighter day
Majestic rises on the world.*

*The clouds of error disappear
Before the rays of truth divine; . . .
The glory bursting from afar
Wide o'er the nations soon will shine.¹*

Interestingly, the Apostle Paul also uses the analogy of light in explaining how he could testify that “we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not

in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4:8–9).

He explains his escape from the brink of it all this way: “For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Most of us at some time in our lives feel the chill winds of adversity. Storms brew, winds blow, rains fall, floods rise. It may seem that there is no end in sight, that we simply face a future of uncertainty and doubt, trial and tribulation.

As well as experiencing periodic thunderstorms, we can experience horrific hurricanes and tempests of turmoil, which can destroy our confidence and shake our sense of self-worth. All that we hold dear can suddenly



feel so ephemeral, slipping through our fingers. Major life changes can knock us off balance, disrupting our sense of equilibrium.

Perhaps an unexpected layoff has led to long-term unemployment, lack of financial freedom has cut choice, or mortgage meltdown has left us in monetary misery. Perhaps anticipated retirement after a long, busy, and productive career has brought a sense of loss. Perhaps sudden sickness or devastating disability has left us feeling “boxed in,” helpless, hopeless, and uncertain. In such circumstances, fear can come easily, while faith can be hard to sustain.

I know all of this for myself. While recovering from surgery to remove two sizeable brain tumors, I experienced periods of melancholy and dismay from the emotional and mental impact of it all. I discovered that I was not as invincible as I once thought I was. Medication did not help, and a relapse or two brought additional despondency. I began to feel sorry for myself.

Decide to Be Happy

Then some wonderful things began to happen. Good friends and trusted Church leaders offered their support and understanding, and I began to listen to their counsel and accept their encouragement. Late one night as I shared my gloomy feelings with our youngest son, he said, “Well, Dad, I have always thought that happiness is a decision.” He is right.

I found myself increasingly expressing gratitude for all the blessings I still enjoyed. I discovered for myself that “this kind [of trial] goeth not out but by prayer and fasting” (Matthew 17:21).

I felt the strength, refreshing power, and love of the Savior. With Paul, I came to rejoice in the knowledge that tribulation, distress, and peril could not separate me from the love of Christ (see Romans 8:35).

Fortunately, the hopeful and certain truth is that no matter what, we can find strength and encouragement. Our burdens can become lighter, even if they do not suddenly

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go away. We can emerge on the other side of the darkest abyss, stronger and more resolute, better men and better women.

Having been proven in the crucible of affliction, we will have cultivated a character that is able to face and withstand future life shocks. As a result, we can use our experiences to lift and empathize with others. Our own example of personal perseverance can give hope to others and inspire our families. We become more fit for the future.

While adversity may be slow to leave us, *we can choose* to leave it any time. The Lord's promise to us is as it was to Alma and his people in the midst of horrendous persecution:

"Lift up your heads and be of good comfort, for I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage.

"And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs" (Mosiah 24:13–14).

Furthermore, the Lord has confirmed, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you" (John 14:18).

Seek Heavenly Help

Heavenly help may not be obvious. We may not immediately see or know that some other burdens that would have come our way have been lifted, diverted from our door.

The Lord assures: "Behold, verily, verily, I say unto you that mine eyes are upon you. I am in your midst and ye cannot see me" (D&C 38:7).

Of course, we may need to be supremely patient with others and ourselves; it often takes time for everything to work out.

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We can find the wherewithal to be thankful for what we have, rather than mourn what we have lost. Interestingly, we often hear that same sentiment expressed by those who have lost all of their worldly possessions in a natural disaster, such as a wildfire, flood, or hurricane. In virtually every case, they say, "At least we still have what is really important."

The testimony of Paul is encouraging:

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:11–13).

As has been written, "All that is unfair about life can be made right through the Atonement of Jesus Christ."²

Whatever our circumstances, there will come a time when we can leave adversity behind and, with the Lord's help, emerge from darkness into an abundance of light. ■

NOTES

1. "The Morning Breaks," *Hymns*, no. 1.
2. *Preach My Gospel: A Guide to Missionary Service* (2004), 52.

Never Alone

By Andrea Dayne Quilla-Soleta

For the past three years, I have had the opportunity to be tested. I have come to realize that no matter what you go through, with God you do not have to do it alone.

Shortly after my 16th birthday, I discovered that I have eczema. It was difficult every morning to look in the mirror and see the rashes that covered my body. I challenged myself to see this as an opportunity to be tested. Instead of feeling sorry for myself, I tried to do what my Young Women teachers taught me: to count my blessings each day despite my trials. Even though I don't have clear skin right now, I am grateful for my family and friends and for my musical talents. I am grateful to have two legs, two hands and feet, eyes to see, and ears to hear. I know that true beauty lies within one's self, not on the outside.

But my eczema gradually got the better of me. I was no longer as friendly as I used to be and no longer smiled. The many doctors I consulted were certain that I would be "flawless" before Christmas. But I wasn't. I prayed every day for

strength to overcome the shyness brought about by my skin disease.

Everybody kept telling me not to think about my plight, that I should act normally and pretend there was nothing wrong with my skin. But this was not easy to do. My mom would gently repeat scripture stories over and over again, hoping to comfort and encourage me.

Doctrine and Covenants 24:8 says, "Be patient in afflictions, for thou shalt have many; but endure them, for lo, I am with thee, even unto the end of thy days." This scripture gave me words to live by. I have them written on

bookmarks, on notebooks, and in my room. It is now one of my favorite verses for encouraging me to do my best despite my trial.

Enduring this trial has been difficult, but now I am more prepared for future trials. Heavenly Father has prepared me so that I can handle whatever challenges come. Now I know that no matter what I go through, I do not have to do it alone. ■

